

started moving towards the water's edge at an angle (following the usual route through which they enter the lake), probably to charge us in case of need.

The boatmen stopped the engine, and prepared to row away lest the elephants charge us. We stopped taking the movie and waited for a while. The elephants then calmed down, and the two small tusked even started a mock fight.

ZOOLOGICAL SURVEY OF INDIA,

34, CHITTARANJAN AVENUE,
CALCUTTA 12,

K. V. LAKSHMINARAYANA

December 12, 1962.

[Mr. E. O. Shebbeare, I.F.S. (Retd.) to whom this note was sent for opinion comments: 'I have never seen a wild herd behave at all as your correspondent tells us the Periya one did, but there is no reason why elephant behaviour should be the same throughout Asia: for example reports have been published that, in S. India, a herd is sometimes led by a bull—a thing I have never come across. My experience with wild elephants has been restricted almost entirely to N. Bengal, Assam, and Chittagong except for a few years as a game-warden in Malaya.'—Eds.]

3. CENSUS OF THE NILGIRI TAHR *HEMITRAGUS* *HYLOCRIUS* (OGILBY) IN THE NILGIRIS

(With a plate)

A census of the Nilgiri Tahr *Hemitragus hylocrius* (Ogilby) (locally known as the Ibex) on the Nilgiri Plateau was taken at the end of January 1963. The tahr country was divided into four blocks and four parties did a simultaneous count in them. Every precaution was taken to avoid duplication. The tahr live among the cliffs and, if undisturbed, come up during the day to feed on grass on the mountain tops. Therefore, the visual method of counting is most suitable and was adopted. Binoculars and telescopes were used as aids. The tahr actually seen and counted amounted to 292. On a very conservative estimate, at least a third of this number escaped observation on account of unfavourable ground, wind, and weather conditions. So it can be safely estimated that there are about 400 tahr in the Nilgiris and their number appears to be registering an increase.

The largest herd consisted of 38 animals. Several fine saddle-backs and brown bucks were seen, also a number of young tahr. Although the herds move from area to area the places where the saddle-backs were found are not given for obvious reasons.

The herd on the eastern slopes around Glen Morgan has been wiped out by poachers, thanks to the ban imposed on shooting and the consequent absence of licence holders who provide a check on illegal shooting. No tahr were seen in the Nilgiri Peak area and it is reported that this is because of poaching by the estate labour. Licence holders will be doing a great service by frequenting this area.

In the Kundah Hydro-Electric Scheme area roads are being laid in the tahr country and forest wattle plantations are also being pushed through. Poaching activity is therefore expected to increase. This seems a crucial stage in the protection of this species.

In conclusion I may state that unless the licence holder is allowed to pursue the saddle-backs, most of which are useless for breeding purposes, and thus patrol the area, there is no doubt that tahr will eventually share the fate of the Glen Morgan herd.

THE NILGIRI WILD LIFE ASSOCIATION,
OOTACAMUND,
NILGIRIS, SOUTH INDIA,
February 14, 1963.

E. R. C. DAVIDAR,
Honorary Superintendent

[Leslie Brown in a note entitled 'Wild Life in some areas of South India', published in Vol. 57 (2) : 403-408, 1960, of our *Journal*, at p. 404, says: 'In the Nilgiris, on the high plateau sambar were few, but I saw without difficulty a herd of 16 Nilgiri Tahr.'—Eds.]

4. STRANDING OF A BLUE WHALE *BALAENOPTERA MUSCULUS* (LINN.) NEAR SURAT, GUJARAT, WITH NOTES ON EARLIER LITERATURE

On press reports of the stranding of a whale, which were confirmed by the local Superintendent of Fisheries, an assistant of the Society, Shri V. C. Ambedkar, was sent to collect data. The whale was stranded on 23 February 1963 close to village Gavier, near Magdalla Port, about seven miles from Surat. On 27 February when the body was examined, decomposition had progressed considerably